

# Wild Times

A Free Publication of the Wyoming Game & Fish Department

Autumn 2007

## HABITAT CONNECTION: HOME TO WILDLIFE



Pronghorn antelope live on the prairie.



Fish live in aquatic, or water habitats.

are you correct. A fish, like a trout, lives in a habitat with cool, clean water where lots of bugs live for them to eat. They also need shelter like the banks of a river to provide a place to hide. A pronghorn antelope's habitat is the prairie. Pronghorns are herbivores. Herbivores are animals that eat only plants like grass, flowers and bushes. Grass and sagebrush provide pronghorn antelope with food on the prairie. They can find water at watering holes and prairie streams.

Habitat is like home to wildlife. Just like people, wildlife needs a home. That home must have food, water, shelter and space. Do you think fish and a pronghorn antelope live in the same habitat?

If you said no, then



There are only a certain number of animals that a habitat can support. That is because a habitat only has a limited amount of food, water, shelter and space. For example, different amounts of grass will grow depending on how much snow and rain we get in a year. If we have good rain and snow, then more grass will grow for the herbivores to eat. If we don't get a lot of precipitation, which is rain and snow, then we might be in a drought, like Wyoming is now. Then there might not be enough food for animals to eat.



Sagebrush covers most Wyoming prairies.



# FIELD Wildlife Journal



Did you know Wyoming has both private and public land? Public land is land that anyone can spend time on, whether it is hunting, fishing or just having a picnic. But someone owns private land, and those people have the right to keep others from using their land. If you go on private land without permission you are trespassing. You should always know where you are and if you have permission to be there.

Wyoming is about 50 percent private land, so the Wyoming



Mark Gocke

Game and Fish Department started a program called the Private Lands Public Wildlife (PLPW) Access program. This program allows people to use some private lands for hunting and fishing. One of the Regional Access Coordinators is Brian Olsen. "I work every day with people who own private land, who are known as landowners, to help hunters and fishermen to gain access to these lands. But I also work with landowners to help them manage their wildlife," he says. "Some landowners have too many elk or deer for the habitat to support so we work with them to keep the numbers where they need to be."



Mark Gocke

Regional Access Coordinator Brian Olsen works with landowners and hunters.

On a typical day, Olsen goes into the field to find land where there might be hunting and fishing opportunities.

He then uses his Global Positioning System (GPS) to locate exactly where he is in Wyoming. Using maps, he figures out who owns the land and starts talking to them about letting the public hunt and fish on their land. If they sign up for the program, he works to develop signs and puts them in the PLPW Access book.

The PLPW Access program signs up land for hunting different kinds of animals as well as for fishing. If you want to catch that wily rainbow trout, check some of the areas the PLPW Access program has for fishing. "You can stop in at any Game and Fish office or a place where they sell licenses and pick up the books to see what private land you can use for hunting and fishing. And remember, only certain lands are signed up, not all private land, so make sure you know where you are," Olsen says. One more great thing about the program is that it is free.

"And don't forget, respect the landowner and the land."



Mark Gocke

Kids hunt on PLPW Access program lands.



# WILDLIFE PROFILES





# WILDLIFE PROFILES

## BULL SNAKE

**Size:** adults are usually 36 to 100 inches long

**Eats:** small rodents

**Lives in:** prairies and grasslands

Did you know the bull snake is the largest snake found in Wyoming? It might act like a rattlesnake if you run into one on the prairie, but its bite is not venomous. Bull snakes are often considered beneficial because they eat small rodents like rats, mice and voles. They usually kills their prey by constriction, or by squeezing it to death. They are also skilled at killing prey by pressing it against a firm object, like a rock. Can you imagine being a snake and trying to catch and kill your food with no arms? Remember, if you see a bull snake, have fun and enjoy the view from a distance, but don't hurt it...it just might eat the next mouse.

## BADGER

**Size:** 20 to 34 inches long, weighing 7 to 25 pounds

**Eats:** small mammals like ground squirrels, pocket gophers, voles and mice

**Lives in:** open prairies throughout Wyoming

Badgers live underground in burrows or dens. They have powerful front legs and really long claws for digging burrows. In digging, badgers loosen the soil with their front feet, pass the dirt under their bellies, and kick it out of the hole with their hind feet. Their bodies are flattish, wider than they are tall. This helps them fit into their burrows. Badgers usually live alone. They also usually avoid humans, but will defend themselves if you tease them.

## MULE DEER

**Size:** Males and females are different sizes. Males weigh from 110 to 475 pounds, and a females weigh from 70 to 160 pounds.

**Eats:** mostly shrubs, flowers and grasses

**Lives in:** mountain, foothills and sagebrush prairies

Did you know that mule deer live in every county in Wyoming? They do. Males are called bucks. Females are called does. And some people call all mule deer muleys for short. They get the name because of their ears that are large like a mule. Mountain lions and wolves are their major natural predators. People also hunt them for meat and their antlers. Hunting helps control the population. When a mule deer gets alarmed it will bounce up and down as it runs. This helps warn the other deer of danger in the area. Next time you see a mule deer, watch to see how it runs. Does it think you are alarming?

## MOURNING DOVE

**Size:** about 12 inches tall with a long, pointed tail

**Eats:** seeds and some insects

**Lives in:** open areas around Wyoming

Did you know mourning doves can fly up to 55 miles per hour at their top speed? They are migratory birds. This means that they fly south in the winter. Some doves go to the southern United States, other even farther to Mexico or Central America. Can you imagine flying that far? The mourning dove gets its name because of its sad-sounding call. It sounds like it is crying; coo-ah, coo, coo, coo. Dove experts believe there are 475 million mourning doves that live in Northern America. This makes the mourning dove the third most numerous bird. Many people in Wyoming enjoy hunting doves in the fall because they are good to eat.



# OUR Wildlife Heritage

## HISTORY OF GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT



The need for taking care of Wyoming's wildlife started long before Wyoming was even a state! In 1869, the Wyoming Territorial Legislature passed an act that stated there was a need for the protection of the game and fish in the Territory of Wyoming. Then, in 1875, the first hunting season was established for big game like elk, deer and antelope. It said that people could only hunt these animals between August 15th and January 15th. There was even a fishing season set in 1884 that said people could only fish between June 1st and November 1st. But after Wyoming became a state in 1890, things started to change. By 1895, we had our first "Fish Commissioner" who was also a Game Warden. In 1925, a Commission was formed similar to what is in place today. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department works to conserve wildlife and serve people. It works with over 800 species of animals throughout Wyoming and has many different jobs. You could be a wildlife photographer, wildlife journalist or a game warden, just to name a few of the jobs in the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.





# Around Wyoming

## WHEN I GO RIDING I SEE...

A lot of prairie dogs and the holes that they live in.  
It is beautiful in Wyoming country.  
With all of its sagebrush and antelope prancing in the dried grass.  
And you should see the rocks shaped into magical features.  
The birds are eating all the bugs in sight.  
You can watch the glorious mountains, filled with sweet prairie flower smells.  
The coyotes are amazing to see howling to each other.  
And when you gallop, you can see the dust and the lizards bouncing just to get away from your horse's hooves.  
When you jump over gullies, it feels like you are flying in the sky.  
It makes me laugh to see the horny toads darting over the sand.  
It's beautiful today so why stay inside and say, "what do I do, Mom"?  
Go outside and take a ride in Wyoming.

KAITLYN M. COUTLER

*Mrs. Cady's 4th Grade Class, Shoshoni, Wyoming*

Tanner Wickham, Saratoga, Wyoming,  
Encampment School, Ms. Kraft



WYOMING'S WILDLIFE



# Outdoor Classroom

**TRACKS:** Can you tell what animal belongs to each track?



**A:** Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep **B:** Bison **C:** Elk **D:** Lynx **E:** Moose **F:** Mountain Goat



Mark Gocke

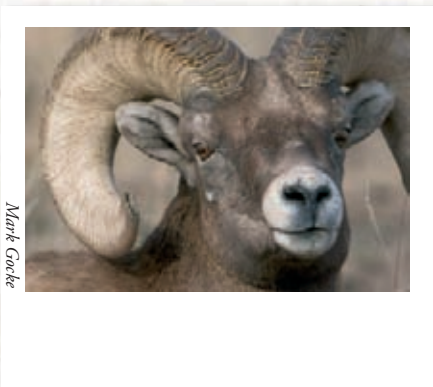


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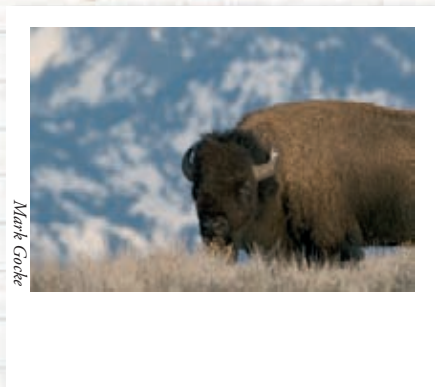


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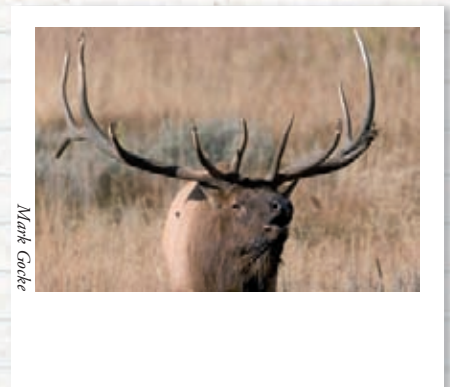
Riparian Habitat



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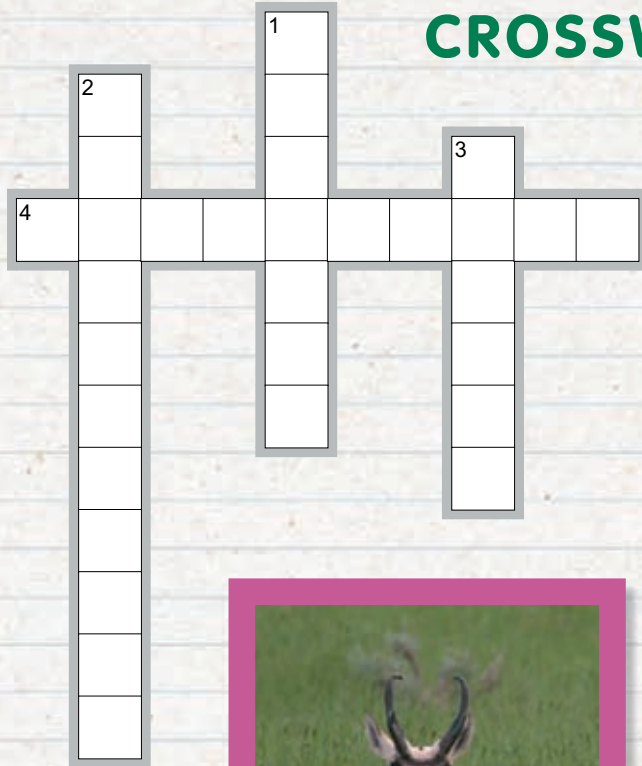
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**HABITAT:** What habitat do you think each of these animals lives in?



# ► TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE ◀

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE



### ACROSS

4. ...are animals that eat only plants.

### DOWN

1. ...is a place where animals live. It must have food, water, shelter and space.

2. If you go on someone else's land, you are...

3. ...left behind by animals feet are signs that they have been there.

1. HABITAT 2. TRESPASSING 3. TRACKS

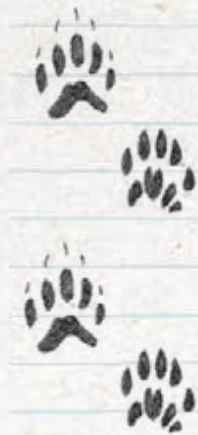
ACROSS 4. HERBIVORES  
DOWN



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